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ONTARIO GOVERNMENT REDUCING HEALTH CARE WAIT TIMES

New Wait Time Data Shows Double-Digit Drops in the Toronto Central Area

TORONTO – New data shows the Ontario government's Wait Time Strategy is resulting in decreases in wait times for key health services in the Toronto Central Local Health Integration Network (LHIN) area, Health and Long-Term Care Minister George Smitherman announced today.

"Trends in the Toronto Central LHIN area are remarkable with significant decreases in wait times for a number of key health services," Smitherman said. "Through the leadership and hard work of thousands of front line professionals, the Wait Time Strategy is clearly achieving real results for patients by improving access to care, closer to home."

As a result of the government's Wait Time Strategy, wait times in which nine out of 10 patients have completed their surgery or have had their exam in the Toronto Central LHIN area have decreased significantly since August/September 2005 by:

- 64.3 per cent for cataract surgery (257 days)
- 52.4 per cent for knee replacement (252 days)
- 46.6 per cent for hip replacement (160 days)
- 36.4 per cent for angiography (12 days)
- 18.2 per cent for angioplasty (four days)
- 13.6 per cent for CT scans (12 days)
- 11.8 per cent for cancer surgery (10 days).

Wait times for other key health services have also declined by:

- 7.1 per cent for cardiac bypass surgery (three days).

At the same time, Smitherman acknowledged one health service area that remains a challenge – there has been a 24.7 per cent increase in wait times in MRI scans since August/September 2005.

"We continue to make significant investments in MRI scans and we expect to see improvements in wait times for this area," Smitherman said.

Since the launch of the Wait Time Strategy, the Ontario government has invested $148,921,759 for additional procedures in hospitals in the Toronto Central LHIN area, including:

- 4,303 cataract surgeries ($3,174,800)
- 32,307 cardiac procedures ($49,987,322)
- 4,594 hip and knee joint replacements ($39,660,476)
- 4,809 cancer surgeries ($33,124,261)

- 68,494 hours, 102,741 exams MRI ($21,850,400)
- 4,497 hours, 15,740 exams CT ($1,124,500).

The new wait time data is available at www.ontariowaittimes.com, which is closing in on nearly 4 million hits as of today.

"We are pleased to have the government and so many committed health service partners with us in this effort to reduce wait times and get patients the care they need on a timely basis," says Barry Monaghan, Chief Executive Officer of the Toronto Central LHIN. "Their leadership is making a difference."

Today's initiative is part of the McGuinty government's plan for innovation in public health care, building a system that delivers on three priorities – keeping Ontarians healthy, reducing wait time and providing better access to doctors and nurses.

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